

## DEVOTED TO THE ILLUSTRATION OF SPIRITUAL INTERCOURSE.

"THE AGITATION OF THOUGHT IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM"

PARTRIDGE AND BRITTAN, PUBLISHERS AND PROPRIETORS, NO. 342 BROADWAY—TERMS, TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM IN ADVANCE; SINGLE COPIES, FIVE CENTS.

VOL. IV.—NO. 39.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JANUARY 26, 1856.

WHOLE NO. 195.

## The Principles of Nature.

## THE DOCTRINE OF PLENARY INSPIRATION.

If ye love me, keep my Commandments, and I will keep the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever; the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it saith him not, neither knoweth him:—John 14:15.

The evils resulting to man and society from a blind defiance and servility to authority, demonstrate that such principle of action is not in accordance with the laws of the divine government which pertain to man's highest nature and destiny. It is a universal truth that where an evil consequence flows from the observance of a certain principle of action, such principle is not well founded.

The mind has a mode of existence peculiar to itself. It has its laws of action and manifestation, of growth and development, the same as the body; and these laws must be carefully noticed and obeyed, or the mind will become unhealthy, and will languish like the physical body. It has its symptoms of health and disease, and they are certain indications of its condition.

As the only method of restoring health to the diseased body is to return to the laws of health, so the only method of restoring health to the diseased mind, is to return to the laws of mental health.

The mind has its appropriate nourishment as well as the body, and that which nourishes it must be received, digested, assimilated and incorporated into, and thus become a part of it, to nourish and develop it.

That food which does not contain nourishment suitable to supply the needs of the body, and which is indigestible, is unhealthy, and impairs the system, tends to introduce disease, and thus works ruin where life and health ought to prevail.

That food which is not of the nature and condition is indigestible, can not become assimilated, and hence it can not nourish and build up the system, but, on the contrary, it becomes a cause of irritation; it impairs the functional action of the organs of digestion and assimilation, and thus prevents the body from receiving true nourishment from any source, thus leading to induce disease, misery and death.

The same is also true of the mind. It can be enlightened by no truth which can not come into its understanding. It can be nourished by that truth only which becomes consciously its own. Hence the mind must receive truth into its understanding before it can make it its own; and whatever of truth will not or can not come into its understanding, it can not receive.

The mind, like the body, can be nourished and developed only by that which it can receive. As the infantile mind requires milk for its nourishment, so also does the infantile mind require the milk of truth for its infantile nourishment. The mind has no natural demand for those truths which lie beyond the sphere of its mental unfolding, and therefore it can not properly receive them; and if it attempt to do so, it will fall in its perceptions, will become confused and disordered, and falsehood will take the place of truth.

To the mental being, the universe is one great ideal. The mind can know nothing of external being further than it is translated into its consciousness; upon the principle that the mind can know nothing but its own consciousness, and that which is wrought therein. Hence the mind can know nothing of the external universe, except its own ideal thereof, and it can believe in nothing except according to its own ideal. Talk to it of the outward universe, and it can understand you no further than its conscious perception can embrace the universe. Talk to the mind of the solar system, and it will understand you no further than its conscious perceptions it embraces the solar system. Talk to it of the earth with its mountains and valleys, its forests and its fertile fields, its rivers, seas, and its oceans, its empires, kingdoms and states, and all these must be translated into its conscious ideal, and according to such translation will it perceive your meaning.

There are as many mental universes as there are minds to form the ideal of them, and there is as great a variety of these ideal universes as there are varieties in the capacities of those minds forming these ideals. There are as many gods—that is, ideal gods—as there are minds to idealize him, and these idealized gods, whether true or false, are the objects of religious worship and veneration. When man says he believes in God, he means he believes in his idealized god; that is, he believes in God according to his idea of him.

The universe of itself has an existence as a divine fact, independent of any idea which man may have of it. God of himself exists independent of our perception of him. But neither does the universe nor God exist to the external mind, except as they exist in its external idea. Consequently, the universe and God are very differently represented in different minds, according to the condition of development and consequent understanding.

Hence, then, is an important truth to be understood in the very outset of our investigations; and that is, the distinction to be made between the ideal and real. The real is God's, the ideal is man's, and the law of true development is that which shall cause the ideal in man to harmonize with the real in God; to unite the ideal in perception with the real in being.

Let us then establish ourselves upon the real, that we may be able to apprehend the true boundaries between it and the

ideal. The first point of establishment is this: whatever of the external the mind perceives, it perceives according to its image or portraiture upon its consciousness, which image or portraiture is the true or false representation of that existence in the mind.

A second point of establishment is, that this conscious image or portraiture is not the real existence, and it may have no resemblance to it; and yet it must be that which the mind receives for the real existence; and it can receive no other, and believe in no other, than the one impressed upon its consciousness; and that which is impressed there will be according to the condition and development of the mind.

From hence it will be perceived that real existence is one thing, and the mental perception of that existence is quite another; and that the mind has the truth of existence only as its perceptions correspond with the actuality; and that the mind's perception thereof will be, according to its condition of being accurately impressed by that which is to be represented.

Hence, again, it becomes most obvious that the mind can not perceive the truth of any being or existence which lies beyond the sphere of its mental unfolding, no matter by whom declared, or upon what authority affirmed. The mind is capable of perceiving whatever can come into its consciousness, and nothing further.

Education consists in unfolding and leading forth the powers and faculties of the being to which it is applied. Educating the body consists in unfolding the capabilities of the body, and educating the mind consists in developing the powers and capabilities of the mind. Everything which makes its impress upon the mind, awakening thoughts, ideas, images, feelings, sentiments, etc., constitutes a portion of its educating circumstances. These circumstances which awaken true ideas of being and existence, and present them in their true order and relation, are favorable to true development; those of a contrary character are adverse thereto.

The ideas awakened in the mind through the instrumentality of words, external language, phenomena, etc., depend upon the condition of the mind being impressed, and its capacity to perceive their significance. Different minds, according to their different conditions and capacities, will receive different impressions from the same language, phenomena, etc., and the ideas and impressions thus received will be, to them, the representatives of that which was spoken, observed, and perceived.

That this is so, the universal observation of all will affirm; that this must be so, the philosophy of mental impossibility will demonstrate. Hence there can be no fixed rule—no determinate standard by which the real in the universe shall be translated into the ideal in man; so that all conditions of mental development shall understand alike the same language, phenomena, or truth. Those only can see and feel alike who are in the same general condition of impossibility.

The physical constitution of man is such that all can not perceive alike natural phenomena; and this difference extends to mental constitutions. Some can not perceive so as to distinguish colors; others have no perception of harmony in musical sounds; some can not appreciate the proportion of numbers and quantities; others perceive no relations and distances.

Owing to this dissimilarity it is impossible to have any external standard of truth, which shall be applicable to all classes of minds. It is impossible to adopt any system of physical or mental discipline which shall be suited to all. That which makes a truthful impression upon a mind in one condition, makes a false impression upon a mind in an opposite condition.

The same is true of evidence. That which produces overwhelming conviction in one mind, makes no impression on another and differently conditioned mind. There is no fixed standard, and there can be none, by which to determine the quantity of evidence necessary to produce conviction. Each mind is subject to the law of its own relation and condition, and that alone must determine its impossibility. Its convictions must determine the amount suited to its condition. And that amount of evidence which perfects conviction is sufficient; any less than that is not.

Hence, then, is laid the foundation for considering the philosophy of the great diversity of opinions which prevail in the world, even among those studying the same phenomena, reading the same book, and listening to the same teachings. No system of truth which is not adapted to all conditions of mind, can establish unity of faith among all conditions. Every man must translate into his own ideal, and believe or reject according to such translation.

Some minds are constitutionally prelatarian; others are of an opposite character. The more intellectual are predisposed to the doctrines of fatalism or predestination; the less intellectual and more emotional are predisposed to the doctrine of free-will.

This predisposition is owing to constitutional peculiarities, by which they are led to adopt different standards of criticism. The intellectual mind adopts the rational standard, which inevitably attunes it to fatalism. The emotional mind adopts the standard of feeling, which leads to free-will. He can not prove by argument that he is free; but he feels that he is, and that is sufficient. The former relies upon his thoughts; the latter upon his feelings.

This difference is even manifested in the physical organism and physiognomical development of these classes. The prelatarian or Presbyterian exhibits a fair development of the intellectual organ, attended with a long, lean face; from which has arisen the expression, "long-faced Presbyterian." The Methodist, who

represents the opposite doctrine, exhibits a very different organization—usually a round, full face, full of emotion and sympathy.

Owing to the difference of mental constitution and development, men can not see alike in all things. They must differ in their ideas of facts, truths and principles, just so far as they differ in mental condition and development. Each must translate by his own standard, and his belief must be according to his translation.

The conditions by which communications are made from mind to mind, are such that each mind must be responsive to the other in that which is to be communicated. If one mind possess that which can find no response in the consciousness of the other no communication can be made upon such subject. Thus, if I wish to communicate with a man who has been born blind, and who, consequently, has had no conscious experience of light, color, and such other sensations as are peculiar to sight, I can not communicate with him upon those subjects involving a perception of light, because there is nothing within the range of his experience which responds to my mental condition.

I may converse with such an one, and may awaken certain ideas in such a mind, but the ideas thus awakened will not respond to the truth of that which they represent. The blind man's idea of light and color will not be a truthful representation thereof; and were he to be restored to sight after having formed these ideas, he would find them an impediment rather than an aid to a truthful perception.

The same is true of all false perceptions. The mind which entertains false ideas upon any subject is in a worse condition for receiving the truth upon such subject, than one who has no ideas at all thereon. It is like building, when the rubbish of a previous edifice is to be removed before the true foundation can be laid.

Hence we can understand how it is that God can make no infallible revelation of his will to man, except by inspiring man to receive it, and that inspiration will be necessary for all who are to receive it. God to man, clothed in human language, comes under the same law as communications from one to another. External language, no matter by whom used, is but a sign of that which is sought to be communicated, and it becomes significant according to the condition and capacity to perceive its meaning in the one to whom it is addressed. The idea sought to be communicated may be absolute truth, but the one received may be as absolutely false.

Owing to these different conditions of understanding in differently developed minds, the same language fails to communicate the same ideas to those minds who have equal honesty of soul, and equal confidence in the communicator. It becomes a different communication according to the different minds receiving it. Hence, from the very laws of communication, external language can not be made the medium of infallible communication to all classes of minds. By the very fact that it is suited to one condition of mental unfolding, it is unsuited to another and different one.

All communications must be unto minds receiving them, according to the understanding of such mind, and they can be by no possibility be anything else. It matters not what may be the idea of the communicator, the one receiving the communication must depend upon his own understanding for its significance. The idea of the communicator may be infallible truth, but the idea of the receiver may be the rankest falsehood. The communication to each is what each understands it to mean, but they understand it differently; therefore it is not an infallible communication to both.

You present me with the Bible as the rule of my faith and practice; you tell me to receive it as the infallible word of God. Now what am I to receive? The entire book of paper, ink and call skin? By no means. What then? Why, the facts, truths and doctrines therein contained. But how am I to know what they are? You answer: Study them and judge of them. [Then the truths and doctrines of that book are to me according to my understanding. Now, is my belief in the book, or in my understanding of the book? And when I am claiming infallibility for the teachings of that book, and pretend to assert what those teachings are, what is that but claiming infallibility for my understanding?]

This proposition can not be controverted: That man, as a rational being, can believe in no fact or truth, except as it exists in his perception or understanding. He may believe that there are facts and truths of which he has no perception or understanding; but that is not believing in the fact or truth. There is a very wide difference between believing in a God, and believing in the only living and true God. All heathenism believe in a God, but it will hardly be claimed that their faith is in the true God.

Since, then, man's faith must correspond to his perception and understanding, it must follow that his faith will be as liable to be false, as his perceptions and understandings are fallible, and that, too, irrespective of the question who speaks: that is, since man can receive no communication clothed in external language, except as it comes into his understanding, it follows that the communication to him can be no more perfect than is his understanding.

This will become further evident from another consideration. That which in itself is fallible cannot determine the quality of infallibility. The very fact that it is liable to err in its determinations in respect to any given subject, demonstrates its incompetency to determine what is infallibly true in respect thereto. Before the mind can determine what is infallibly true, it must

possess an infallible standard and then be infallible in its application.

Since, then, all communications addressed to man by means of an external language must come into his understanding if he receive them (and he can receive them only as they do come into his understanding), such communications can be no further infallible than is the department of the understanding to which they are addressed. And since the impress they make upon the minds receiving them is according to the condition and development of such minds, minds differently conditioned and developed will be differently impressed by such communications, and hence they will not be the same to all classes of minds.

This claim for the infallibility of the teachings of the Bible, set up by those who assume to teach what those doctrines are, amounts to a claim for the infallibility of their understanding; for to assume to know that the doctrines therein contained are infallible truth, is to assume that man is infallible in determining such infallibility. For the Bible, in its truths, can be to man only that which his understanding makes it. It can be infallible to him only who is infallible to perceive its meaning; and he only is infallible to perceive its meaning, who is infallible in that department of his understanding to which it is addressed.

This conclusion can not be avoided. It is an almost self-evident truth that God can not make an infallible revelation of his word and will to man, any further than man is infallible in his understanding to perceive it. If God, therefore, has made an infallible revelation of himself, none but the infallible in understanding and perception can certainly know it.

When an individual affirms that the Bible or any other book is a revelation of the infallible truths of God, the question at once arises, How did he find that out? By what standard did he try the revelation to determine its infallibility? For unless he possess an unerring standard, and be himself infallible in its application, he is not competent to decide the question of the infallibility of the revelation.

For our proposition is self-evident that the fallible can not determine the quality of infallibility. The words and sentences of any other book, any further than they awaken higher perceptions of truth, have deeper meanings, and awaken truer thoughts, ideas, etc., if this be true of the Bible, how are those thoughts, ideas, images, etc., to be communicated to other minds not developed to the sphere thereof?

If it took the inspiration of the Spirit to awaken these thoughts and perceptions in the minds of the writers of the Bible, because of themselves they lay beyond the plane of man's natural understanding, how are those spiritual perceptions to be made known to those minds who have not the benefits of this spiritual inspiration? If the incompetency of man's natural understanding rendered it necessary for God to inspire man that he might perceive spiritual truth, then it becomes necessary that all who are to have a perception and understanding of such inspired truth, should be inspired to such an extent.

If there are truths and doctrines in the Bible, or in any other book depending upon the inspirations of the Spirit for their revelation to man, then it will require the same kind of inspiration in all who are to perceive them; and the inspiration of reception must be as infallible as the inspiration of impartation, to be sure that the infallibility of communication is maintained. The spiritual principles and doctrines which depend upon special inspiration for their existence in the minds of men, must depend upon the like inspiration for their communication and continuance in other minds.

This will become most obvious by considering the following propositions: God, written and pantomimic language is not competent to convey correct ideas further than the true elements of such ideas exist in the consciousness of the individual to whom the communication is to be made. By the term elements of an idea is meant those conscious perceptions and appreciations necessary for the construction of the idea. Thus, if the idea to be communicated involve a conscious perception of light and color, then the mind receiving the communication must have had such conscious perception; but if such mind has never had any such perception, then it has not the elements out of which the idea sought to be communicated, can be constructed.

Hence it follows, if a truth be to be communicated, the elements of which do not exist in the consciousness, that truth must be communicated by some other means than external language.

Hence, also, all ideas of being and existence, of action and manifestation, which transcend the natural means of addressing the consciousness and the powers of man's natural understanding, if communicated to the mind at all, must be communicated by other means, than external or symbolic language.

Hence it follows, if man has not a natural perception of God in the divinity of his being and action, he can never acquire such a perception through a written or spoken communication; because a written or spoken language can only use such conscious elements as already exist in the mind. Its office is to construct the idea, etc., out of those elements already existing in the consciousness.

From the foregoing consideration, it necessarily follows that external language according to its natural significance, is not competent to convey spiritual and divine truths; because the natural mind has not associated with such language a spiritual and divine significance. For this reason it is, that the things of the Spirit must be spiritually discerned.

Hence, when truths peculiarly spiritual, as distinguished from those which are natural and material, are to be communicated, they must be impressed directly upon the consciousness; that is, they must be communicated by inspiration.

It is important to be remembered that our belief in any doctrine or truth, must conform to our thought that which is to be believed. A true idea or perception can alone lay the foundation for a true faith. Our belief is not in the Bible, but in our understanding of the Bible. Neither is our belief in God, but in our idea of him. So far as we have a true perception of the divine being and character, so far have we the foundation for a true faith in him. But so far as our perception is false, so far will our faith be erroneous.

A professed faith in any creed or doctrine, which we do not understand, is absurd. What are we to believe concerning a doctrine, the truth of which the mind cannot perceive? How is the mind to receive such a doctrine? And how is it to know when it has received it?

If there are truths in the Bible which could not be known given to man except by inspiration, because man had no conscious elements within him for the perception of such truths, reception of them, then, those truths can not be communicated to others except by inspiration; and those who are not inspired to understand them will not be able to perceive them by merely reading their forms of expression.

If special inspiration were necessary to convey special ideas of God, spirit, heaven, etc., then that same special inspiration will continue to be necessary to communicate the same ideas to other minds. If there be any class of ideas dependent upon special inspiration for their first revelation, they must continue to be thus dependent for their continued communication.

The truth of this will be perceived when we consider that all thoughts, ideas, sentiments, etc., represented by external language, must be addressed to the mind, and that it is the natural and intellectual nature of the mind which is to be addressed, and which is to be developed. The external language is valuable only as it serves to awaken true thoughts and just ideas, etc., in the minds of others. The external language of higher thoughts or truer ideas than, by their mental development, they are prepared to receive. If the language or communication be intended to convey truths lying beyond the scope of their intellectual development, they will not awaken their true representatives in such minds. Therefore, all the disputation about the plenary inspiration of the Bible, or any other book, is foolish and absurd, unless all are equally inspired to understand its meaning.

Whether the Bible be true or false in itself, it must become to every man what his understanding makes it mean, and it can, by no possibility, become anything else to him; and his understanding of its meaning must depend upon his condition of mental being and development. Hence the diversity of opinions among Bible believers respecting the doctrines of that book. All these things demonstrate, that whatever else the Bible may be, it is not the word of God to all who receive it as such.

In matters of communication, infallibility of impartation is of but little value, unless it be attended by infallibility of reception. No one can doubt that nature as the manifestation of divine wisdom, love and power, has ever been proclaiming the infallible truths of God. But such truths, though perfectly proclaimed, have ever been imperfectly perceived by man. The real language of nature has been the same in every age of the world; but it has been very differently understood in every age. Its word has always been true; but to man's perception and understanding it has always been false.

In one age of the world the thunders were considered the special organ of Heaven. The lightnings were supposed to be the chariots of the gods, sent for the transportation of their favorite sons to heaven. An eclipse was supposed to be a manifestation of divine anger, and a meteor to be the precursor of the approaching judgment.

These things demonstrate the folly of placing any stress upon the infallibility of communication, so long as there is such fallibility on the part of those who are to receive it. A perfect revelation must necessarily imply two things: perfection in the communicator, and perfection on the part of the recipient of the communication. If either be lacking a perfect revelation can not be made.

So far as a revelation is to affect the subject of it, it can become no more perfect or infallible than is the receptive power or capacity of the subject. If the Bible be the infallible word of God to man, no man can know it, who is not as infallible to perceive and understand it, as it is infallible to communicate; and it can be the infallible word of God to none who are not infallible in their understanding of it.

The philosophy and hypocrisy of the Romish priesthood is seen in their view of this subject. They hold that a perfect revelation from God to man would be a failure, unless the recipient of such a revelation were inspired to receive it; and that the Romish Church in the person of her Popes, bishops and priests, is that inspired recipient. Hence the authority with which their doctrines and expositions are required to be received. Hence, also, they refuse to circulate the Bible among those who are not inspired to understand the divinity of its teachings.

The Romish Church can justify her course, not only upon principles of philosophy, but also by reference to facts. She says: Put the Bible into the hands of uninspired men, and she teaches them to read and expound it, and not perceiving its inspired truths, they receive and teach falsehoods; and if that







faith of the society to which he belongs.



A. J. BRADY, PRINTER,  
No. 345 Broadway, Spiritual Telegraph Building.